

activity is provided. The gaming apparatus includes a display device to present a display grid having a plurality of display segments. The display device also presents multiple display subsegments in at least one of the display segments. A random number generator randomly selects symbols for presentation in the display segments and display subsegments of the display grid. A processor identifies winning symbol combinations presented on display segment paylines of the display grid. The winning symbol combinations include corresponding symbols in each of the display segments of the display segment paylines. Each of the symbols presented in the display subsegments of a particular display segment is independently considered in identifying the winning symbol combinations occurring on the display segment paylines encompassing that display segment. In other embodiments, the processor is further configured to identify winning symbol combinations presented on dynamically-generated paylines, where the dynamically-generated paylines are identified by determining an occurrence of a predetermined number of adjacent display segments presenting the corresponding symbols.

[0013] In accordance with another embodiment of the invention, a slot machine is provided which includes a display to present a display grid having a plurality of display segments. A random number generator randomly select symbols for presentation in the display segments. A processor identifies at least one dynamically-generated winning symbol combination by recognizing a predetermined minimum number of adjacent display segments that present matching symbols.

[0014] These and various other advantages and features of novelty which characterize the invention are pointed out with particularity in the claims annexed hereto and form a part hereof. However, for a better understanding of the invention, its advantages, and the objects obtained by its use, reference should be made to the drawings which form a further part hereof, and to accompanying descriptive matter, in which there are illustrated and described specific examples of an apparatus in accordance with the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] The invention is described in connection with the embodiments illustrated in the following diagrams.

[0016] FIG. 1 is a block diagram illustrating one embodiment of a gaming activity utilizing multi-symbol display segments in accordance with the invention;

[0017] FIG. 2 illustrates a multi-payline display grid in which the principles of the present invention may be applied;

[0018] FIG. 3 is a diagram of an exemplary slot game grid in which the principles of the present invention may be employed;

[0019] FIG. 4 is a flow diagram of an exemplary embodiment of a method for utilizing multi-symbol display segments in slot game activities in accordance with the invention;

[0020] FIG. 5 is a flow diagram of another exemplary embodiment of a method for utilizing multi-symbol display segments in accordance with the present invention;

[0021] FIGS. 6 and 7 provide examples of particular embodiments of a slot gaming activity utilizing multi-symbol display segments in accordance with the invention;

[0022] FIG. 8 illustrates an embodiment in which different numbers of display subsegments in the display segments are implemented in connection with the multi-symbol display segments according to the invention;

[0023] FIG. 9 illustrates an embodiment of a slot gaming activity utilizing multi-symbol display segments in a three-dimensional (3D) array in accordance with the invention;

[0024] FIG. 10 illustrates an exemplary embodiment of the formation of adjacent, free-forming paylines in accordance with the present invention;

[0025] FIGS. 11-13 illustrate various embodiments of the dynamic generation of paylines in connection with a multi-symbol grid in accordance with the invention;

[0026] FIG. 14 is an embodiment of a casino-style gaming device in which the principles of the present invention may be applied;

[0027] FIG. 15 illustrates an exemplary embodiment of a user interface for a slot machine in which the principles of the present invention may be applied;

[0028] FIG. 16, including FIGS. 16A, 16B, 16C, 16D, and 16E, illustrates the individual presentation of each winning payline resulting from the multi-symbol display segments in accordance with one embodiment of the invention; and

[0029] FIG. 17 illustrates a representative computing system capable of carrying out operations in accordance with the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE ILLUSTRATED EMBODIMENTS

[0030] In the following description of the invention, reference is made to the accompanying drawings which form a part hereof, and in which is shown by way of illustration the specific embodiment in which the invention may be practiced. It is to be understood that other embodiments may be utilized, as structural and operational changes may be made without departing from the scope of the present invention.

[0031] Generally, the present invention is directed to a method and apparatus for providing multi-symbol display segments to allow multiple payout opportunities for each payline. The invention also includes features relating to the dynamic creation of paylines from adjacent symbols at each of the display subsegments.

[0032] The present invention, as described more fully below, is applicable to various gaming activities that are played on a gaming machine, including slot games such as reel slots and video slots, and other games utilizing a string of symbols to generate a game result. The present invention is described in terms of slot machines to provide an understanding of the invention. While the invention is particularly advantageous in the context of slot machines, and while a description in terms of slot machines facilitates an understanding of the invention, the invention is also applicable to other gaming activities of chance utilizing symbol strings as will be readily apparent to those of skill in the art from the description provided herein.